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FADS IN FOODS

All That Grows Is Not Organic. The recent burst of enthusiasm for nutrition and food, especially organic food, has enabled certain people to take advantage of persons seeking "pure food." So warns Dr. Ruth M. Leverton, science advisor to the Administrator of USDA's Agricultural Research Service and the author of a number of books on nutrition. She said the enthusiasm is welcome, but added that too many people have become "experts" on nutrition without the benefit of training. There is nothing wrong with choosing to buy organically grown food, Dr. Leverton said. Such food may have desirable characteristics not always found at the usual food market -- it may be fresher and more flavorful. However, greater values in vitamins and minerals are not likely to be one of these characteristics. According to the ARS nutritionist, research has established that, generally, elements essential to plant growth enter the plant in the inorganic form. If an element is originally present in the soil in the organic form, it is broken down to inorganic form by micro-organisms in the soil before the element enters the plant. Dr. Leverton said some people follow fad diets to hazardous extremes in carrying out strict vegetarianism and ideas about natural and organically grown foods (the misinformation about nutrition and food is "serious and growing more serious"). She also pointed out that not all food described as organic or natural is actually organically grown. Logistics alone set a limit on the use of organically grown foods. "It is one thing to grow tomato plants on a balcony or a home garden using organic fertilizer, but it is another thing to grow enough food for the Nation by such methods," she said. This fact is reflected in the higher price of organic foods, estimated to cost at least one-third to one-half more than the same foods found in the usual food market.

PLENTIFULS FOR MARCH

With Spring Just Around The Corner. Foods on the Plentiful List for March include peanuts and peanut products, prunes and prune juice, potatoes and potato products, canned peaches, canned fruit cocktail, canned cranberry sauce and cranberry juice cocktail, frozen concentrated grape juice and canned grape juice, split peas and eggs. For April the Plentifuls will include eggs, milk and dairy products, canned cranberry sauce and cranberry juice cocktail, frozen concentrated grape juice and canned grape juice, canned applesauce and apple juice, canned pears, prunes and prune juice, and potatoes and potato products.



WITH YOUR SPRING HOUSECLEANING

Why Not Review Your Food Buying Habits? The kinds of foods you buy, in addition to their prices, determine your bill at the checkout counter. USDA reports the costs of a typical selection of domestically produced farm foods that go into the shopping cart: In 1971, the whole year's bill totaled up to \$1,244--\$21 more than in 1970. One dollar of the increase was for higher farm prices; the other \$20 went for higher marketing costs. The increase last year was one of the lowest in years--good buys for pork, eggs, and potatoes plus Phase I price ceilings helped hold prices in line. The shoppers who converted some of their higher pay into better eating probably saw their food bill go up more, especially if they decided to eat out more. Restaurant prices went up more sharply than those in food stores. Last year's increase in the market-basket food bill was reminiscent of modest increases registered during the early 1960's. This year, it looks like the cost of that 1-year shopping list will rise more than last year. It will probably go up around \$45. But that is for a fixed list of items. How you vary your menu from that list to meet your family's own needs, tastes, and budget will determine your actual shopping costs.

BREADS, CAKES, AND PIES

Kneading Needs and Cookie Cutters. Home baked bread, tempting cakes and pies, cookies warm from the oven are delights shared by the whole family. These foods are also a delicious way to make important contributions to the diet. In addition to food energy, the enriched or whole-grain flours supply B-vitamins, iron, and protein. Whether you are an experienced cook looking for a new baking technique or a beginner learning the basic points, a new USDA bulletin, "Breads, Cakes, and Pies in Family Meals," will add to your baking know-how. The latest in the popular "family meal" series, prepared by nutritionists in USDA's Agricultural Research Service, gives information on ingredients, measuring, mixing, baking, storing, and freezing baked products. One section includes 30 recipes for quick breads, yeast breads, cakes, cookies, frostings, pies, and pastries. Variations are described for many of the recipes and calorie values are given. Copies of "Breads, Cakes, and Pies in Family Meals" (G-136) are for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, for 20 cents each. Two other bulletins in the "family meal" series have recently been revised. They are "Fruits in Family Meals" (G-125) and "Poultry in Family Meals" (G-110). Both are for sale at 20 cents a copy from the Superintendent of Documents.

CHEMICAL SAFETY MONTH

With Farmers, Consumers, and The Environment in Mind. In cooperating in "March is National Chemical Safety Month," the U.S. Department of Agriculture again expresses its concern for the safe use of chemicals on the farm, at home -- anywhere. In keeping with this concern, USDA recently announced a newly expanded activity -- the Pest Management Program. Safe use of pesticides and reduction in the quantities used are two major goals of the new program. It is designed to help protect farmers, farm workers, consumers -- as well as the environment -- from the effects of currently used pesticides. The program, which includes both laboratory research and field studies, stresses use of a combination of biological and cultural pest control methods with limited use of pesticides. Major emphasis in 1972 will be on control of cotton pests. The program, however, calls for pilot projects aimed at reducing pesticides use by producers of apples, potatoes, sweet corn and other food crops.

SPRING FOOD PREVIEW

Officially, it arrives on March 21...Unofficially, it begins when things green up and warm winds blow...Forecasters consider it the months of April, May, and June...Spring! A time for buying things, going places. And fussing over the budget. Make that task easier by shopping the food bargains this spring, since food prices overall figure to rise only modestly from winter levels.

THE SPRING QUARTER usually marks the year's heaviest volume for eggs featured in the ads around Eastertime. The lowest egg prices actually come after Easter.

PORK prices certainly won't match the buys last spring, when farmers produced lots of pork. But prices may not be up much from current level.

Spring LAMB is on the counters. Lamb prices have risen quite a bit in recent years because we produce fewer lambs.

Farmers are sending more steak and other BEEF to the table this spring. Even so, prices are likely to be about the same as they are now. Our beef appetite continues unabated, and smartly higher consumer incomes this year will enable us to buy more. What's more, there is less pork to compete with beef than there was last spring.

Like beef, CHICKEN will be more plentiful than last spring. Prices may be slightly higher than right now, although chicken is often featured much lower for the weekend specials.

The swelling supply of farm-fresh PRODUCE that reaches peak volume in summer will begin to arrive during the spring. And this spring prices are likely to average lower than in the months just past. Chief contributors will be lettuce and tomatoes, the salad stars. Lettuce is recovering in volume after encountering cool weather in January and February and volume of both Floridian and Mexican tomatoes is increasing. The spring procession of crops includes sweet corn, asparagus, white and yellow onions, peppers and cucumbers--and in late spring, cantaloups and watermelons.

How about potato salad for spring outings? Prices for all-purpose potatoes are still very reasonable, following another very large crop last fall, although new potatoes and western russets (bakers) may cost a little more than last spring. Don't forget french fries, either. Frozen fries are plentiful and about 3 cents cheaper for a 9-ounce box than they were 5 years ago.

Even though spring isn't thought of as a season for fruit, there is a whole spectrum of processed and fresh fruit items, that will be in larger supply this spring. Watch for: creamy white canned pears; yellow lemons (lots more this year); bright bananas (still a good buy); a much larger crop of Valencia oranges (harvested during spring and summer months); plenty of scarlet cranberry sauce and cranberry juice cocktail, deep brown prunes and juice, and purple grape juice.

ARE FOOD PRICES OUT OF LINE?

Here Are The Facts. Actually, going back as far as the mid-'50's, food prices have not increased as much as the Consumer Price Index (CPI), an average of all prices we pay. The CPI and its food component rose along nearly identical lines from 1957 until 1965; and since then the CPI has risen faster. In 1971, for example, the CPI was #121 --prices averaged 21 percent higher than in the 1967 base year. How did this happen? Prices of food items, which account for about one-fifth of the overall CPI, rose 18 percent during these years. Yet prices of remaining nonfood items rose 22 percent. Grocery store prices rose less than the overall food-price figure. When you separate out the price of eating meals out, such as a cafeteria lunch or a dinner at a good restaurant, prices in the grocery cart rose 16 percent between 1967 and 1971.

SNAP-ON BATHROOMS

Bringing The Outhouse In. The "outhouse" has always been a part of rural America. In recent years, the "portable john" has become a customary sight at fairs, rallies, and other gatherings. For the past 100 years, indoor bathrooms have been available in metropolitan areas. Now features of these three conveniences have been combined into what has become known as the "snap-on bathroom." This is a pre-constructed unit containing a 30 gallon hot water heater, flush toilet, shower and tub, medicine cabinet, and electrical outlets. The unit can be wheeled by truck up to a home where it can be attached and operational within a matter of days. The home, of course, must be prepared to receive the unit with electricity, running water, and sewage disposal facilities. "Snap-on bathrooms" are receiving serious study in several States which have many dwellings classified as substandard because they lack indoor bathrooms. In South Carolina, where about 150,000 homes lack some or all plumbing, USDA's Farmers Home Administration is working with the State Housing Authority to provide these units to residents who qualify for FHA loans. FHA's housing program includes repair loans of up to \$3500 to correct conditions endangering the family's health and safety, especially lack of plumbing. Several manufacturers have expressed interest in producing the snap-on units which cost between \$1500 and \$2500, well within the range of FHA's home repair loans.

OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

And Back To Nature. More and more schools are incorporating environmental/conservation education into the total curriculum to help students understand man's dependence on natural resources. Much can be learned from textbooks, lectures, and discussions. But an "outdoor classroom" located on the school site enables children to learn directly from the natural environment as well as about it. USDA's Soil Conservation Service has prepared a booklet, "Outdoor Classrooms on School Sites," giving ideas for developing and using outdoor areas. It explains how to get started, how to prepare a conservation plan for the school site, and where to get technical help in applying conservation practices that will provide learning opportunities. Involving students in the actual planning and development of the outdoor classroom helps them gain a realistic understanding of conservation planning. It helps develop an appreciation of the technical skill and knowledge needed to solve conservation problems and provides opportunities for personal involvement in natural resource protection and management. Single copies of the booklet are available free from the Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Multiple copies can be purchased at 25 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

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